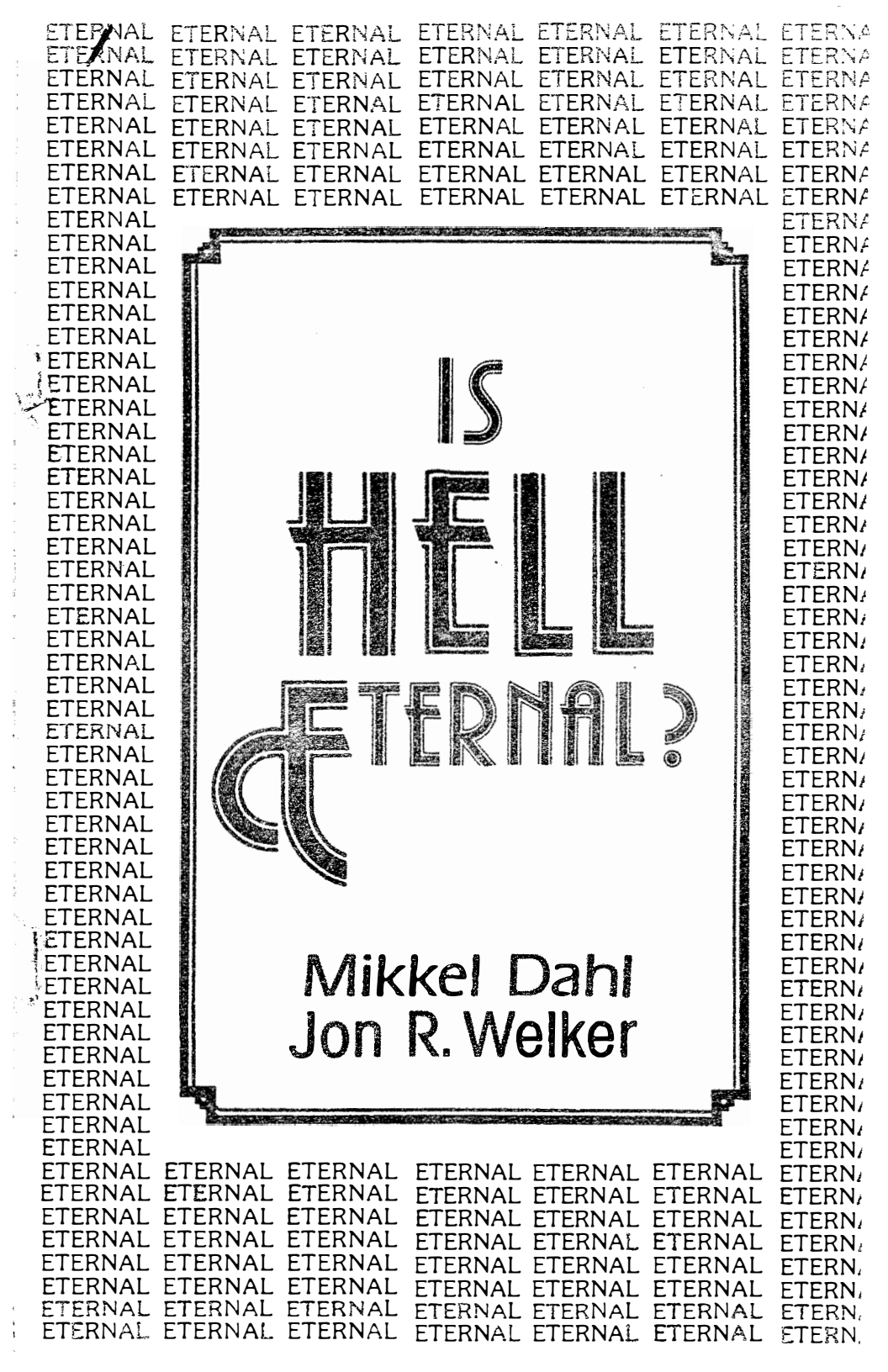
ETERNAL
IS
HELL
ETERNAL?
Mikkel Dahl
Jon R. Welker

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the works of the Reverend and much respected Mikkel Dahl of Canada for the life he has given in service to the Lord and His people in order to make the Bible understandable to many such as myself. His works and writings have contributed to the truths brought out in this book.

– *Jon R. Welker*

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INTRODUCTION

As the expression goes, let me "put my cards on the table" at the very beginning of this study. Simply put, my reason for writing this book is to provide the members of our church, our Bible students and other people who might be or become associated with us, a readily available source of information which can be presented to our critics on the subject to be evaluated.

It may be that this book will not settle a centuries old debate within the Christian church, nor convince minds which have determined to accept no other view of the matter than that which they have held over the years as being the only correct and 'safe' position to hold regarding the duration of 'hell'. Such tradition, it has been said, "sticks like sin". And those so enamoured by the 'prestige' and 'authority' of men who parade a long list of initials and alphabetical letters behind their names, will not likely be impressed by my obscurity or lack of learning in the schools of the 'lawyers, Pharisees and hypocrites'. (That is not said from an anti-intellectual stance, since I have a degree from a well known graduate school, M.A. plus, and having graduated summa cum laude.) If people are persuaded that the proper exposition of truth is confined only to the learned within our societies of men, then such are very ignorant of the clear-cut message given us by the Lord Jesus Christ in His having chosen 12 of the most uneducated men to call His first disciples and to whom He felt He could best teach the Truth. It has been said that education can be enlightening and thus able to lift the yoke of bondage and oppression. Such

a concept has merit, but we must also entertain the idea that too much education in man's schools of thought can also distort the Truth of God and harden the heart's receptivity (through preconceived ideas) to the acceptance of new insights. The *thinking* individual has but to look out upon our world society to be convinced of my statement!

NEITHER is this study an attempt to present all of the concepts which we share on this subject nor the biblical evidence to support such. Mention will later be made of other works we make available to better cover the evidence for our case. But sufficient will be presented to make a case for this concept: THERE IS ENOUGH CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE REALMS WE CALL CHRISTENDOM AND EVIDENCE WITHIN THE SCRIPTURES TO SUPPORT DIVERGENT VIEWS UPON THE SUBJECT OF HELL, TO PERSUADE THE THINKING INDIVIDUAL THAT OUR POSITION IS VIABLE, WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION AND DOES NOT CONFINE US TO THE ALL-TO-QUICKLY-USED "BRANDING IRON" (OF MANY WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY) AS A 'DEVIANT' SECT OR CULT.

Now, let me make a few further introductory remarks before presenting our position. It was several years after I (and others in the circle of my associates) had come to realize that the common teaching regarding 'hell' by traditional Christianity was in error, that I was surprised to discover that anyone who did not believe in the 'eternalness' or 'perpetualness' of hell was automatically labeled by the names of 'universalists' or 'universal reconciliationists'! To the critics, that took care of it - "you are one of THEM"! I hadn't the slightest idea of such doctrines or Origen, Schleiermacher, or such people and concepts. But there I was, grouped together with them and labeled 'deviant'. It was as if I was illegitimate in my relationship with the Lord and to be ostracized from the 'real Christian community' so as not to defile. It was indeed heartbreaking to see such expressions of rejection from those I wanted to call 'fellow pilgrims'

and brethren. I could look out on the great issues which separated many of the churches and even the more liberal and mainline denominations and see a basic level of acceptance of legitimacy - debates like 'transubstantiation vs. consubstantiation', 'the gifts of the Spirit in the church and the Charismatic movement', 'infant baptism vs. adult baptism', 'the virgin birth controversy', and others. But, divergent views about the 'eternalness' of hell? Well, it has been all that some can do to hold back their pens and tongues from dealing you that ever-feared death blow by labeling you 'a cult'. What duplicity! What travesty! What hypocrisy! I love the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in His Deity, His virgin birth, the efficacy of His blood atonement, His being three days and three nights in the grave and His resurrection on the third day, His ascension to the right side of His Father, etc. In most other areas, I was labeled a conservative or fundamentalist. But here I was being called 'a deviant' and my very relationship with the Savior questioned. If Christendom can find room for such other controversies - even to questioning the reality of the virgin birth - I reasoned, why can't they leave me alone too? Why do I have to be looked upon as a possible 'heretic'? After I got over the shock of it all, I decided to look elsewhere for my acceptance - "Reputation is what men say about, but character is what God and His angels know about you"!

But just in case you are still unconvinced that such diversity of views on the subject of hell is not necessarily a reason to question whether such a one is a member of a 'cult', let me here quote from Walter Martin in his book entitled ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY. It appears that Walter Martin is fast becoming the evangelical 'guru' authority on the 'acceptability' or 'non-acceptability' of a person's experience in Christ. With one stroke of his pen in a new book, he can confine you to the outer realms of hell, the 'deviants' within Christendom, or to the upper chairs of acceptability and 'admir-

ation' within the Christian society. His books on the cult phenomenon and such, have 'earned' him a high standing in the Christian mainstream. I, for one, am cautious of such people who would presume to comment in an attitude of finality and authority on each person's experience with Christ, but I know that there are those who are so beguiled. So, here is his verdict:

> "That there are many cults in America today no informed student of contemporary theology can deny. But in addition to the direct problem of non-Christian cults is the disturbing problem of doctrinal deviations within the pale of orthodox Christianity itself.... The deviation is universal reconciliation, or just plain old-fashioned Universalism.... The United States has increasingly become a mecca for the theology of Universalism...."

So you see, Mr. and Mrs. Critic, even Walter Martin is reluctant to label a Universalist a 'cultist'. So who are you to argue with the likes of such a renowned man? Yes, I am being somewhat facetious, but it is with good intentions to cause the reader to *think*. We live in a day and age when we can too quickly put labels on people which are unkind and damaging to those we have been commanded to love - beginning first with the household of faith. I am personally familiar with one case in which the parents of some church members will not accept the legitimacy of their children's conversions because of this issue. Yet they are members of a mainline denomination that has accepted the ordination of avowed homosexuals into the ministry - along with other such 'deviant behavior'. No, that doesn't mean that they believe in such themselves, but it should cause them to be a bit more cautious about their own criticisms, etc. "O, ye hypocrites....", said the Christ.

Moreover, it is extremely important to realize

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that just because a person does not believe in 'eternal damnation in hell forever AND ever' (and thus becomes labeled 'universalist'), that does not mean they therefore believe what the generalizations which have been written about the topic say that they believe. By that I mean one cannot presume to know what such a person believes about hell just by reading an article or book about 'universalism', etc. I surely don't believe many of the things that 'universalists' supposedly adhere to, nor do I use all of their so-called 'stock answers or arguments' for presenting their case against the 'eternalness' of hell. This will be shown more clearly as we proceed.

Therefore, even such statements as those by Richard J. Bauckham, writing in the January, 1979 issue of THEMELIOS, must be disregarded to some extent. He states:

> "Thus the problem of universalism cannot be reduced to a simple choice of alternatives. Only the belief that untimately all men will be saved is common to all universalists."

Well, if I am labeled a "universalist" because I do not believe in the "damnation of hell FOREVER AND EVER" then that statement of Mr. Bauckham's is not adequate to describe that which I do believe. The issue of everyone being saved (as is commonly understood in Christendom) and the 'eternalness of hell' do not necessarily coincide, in my concepts. Perhaps the illustrious 'theologians' will have to invent a new term for where I stand - maybe 'revised universalist' or some such terminology?

In what could be seen as one of his various hastily drawn opinions, which seem to have become a pattern of Mr. Walter Martin in his effort to discredit the beliefs of those whom he suspects as being outside Christianity, or with whom he disagrees, he has stated:

"In a supposed emphasis upon exegesis from

> the original languages of the Scripture, individuals who are hardly qualified to read technical exegetical books continually pose as scholars of the original languages!"

After such a statement, I suppose one is supposed to give up and turn all matters of faith and belief over to the educated seminarians, 'theologians' and scholars of the Bible. If the Gospel was first presented to the base, the uneducated and the lowly of the earth, then by what stretch of the imagination are we to assume that it is the educated, snooty, erudite and scholarly of this world who are going to be able to return us to the foundations of truth?! Hear Jesus' words to the theologians of His day:

> "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered."

And again,

> "When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him, to catch Him in something He might say"!
>
> Luke 11:52 - 54

It hasn't changed much, has it. Our self-proclaimed "keepers of the faith" are in so many ways like those who plotted against the Truth incarnated in human flesh over 1900 centuries ago. I, like the Apostle Paul, must say that all my training and education only accounts me as the least of Christ's disciples. It may even hinder me in attaining the pure, childlike faith that I see exhibited by many of God's people. But when I look out upon the scholars and theologians of Christianity as a whole,

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I see another picture. There we behold apostates, haughty intellectuals, quarrelings over the Virgin birth, support of homosexuals, revolutionaries and Marxist philosophies. And even among the more conservative seminaries we see that there is much debate over those who would argue for more controversial viewpoints in order to be acceptable to the scholars of the world. You will often read about the divisions and/or purges in such places in an effort to stem the advance of those with more modern and liberal viewpoints. Such places and great education often breed such attitudes. Please, do not misunderstand me. I appreciate the efforts of all those who serve Christ and I appreciate what Mr. Martin and others <u>try</u> to accomplish, but when they presume to set themselves up in such places of authority as to pass judgment upon the faith of others - even to the point of causing others to ostracize conscientious Christians, then I must strongly speak out.

Pigeonholing, trite statements of generalization, haughty put-downs and such are not the measure of whether an idea is the truth as Jesus taught it. Neither is this statement of Mr. Martin's:

> "The real key as to why universal reconciliationists cannot accept eternal punishment is that they are pure rationalists."

You who are more simple in your faith, I ask you - have you ever met or heard of a theologian who does not pride himself in his rationality? They are supposedly the ones who are more rational in their 'exegesis', etc. Then why the double standard applied in such shallow criticism when it comes to those with whom you disagree? Let us again look at God's Word through the prophet Isaiah:

> "Come now let us reason together, says the Lord."
>
> Isa. 1:18 (NAS)

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And in the same manner said Jesus:

> "And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?"
>
> Luke 12:57 (NAS)

God's Word is our standard of measurement and He wishes us to "rightly divide" it, evaluating, thinking and judging the harmony and nature of God. If certain behavior is commended of men, then we are to judge that God is at least that good and better (or more noble).

> "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"
>
> Luke 11:13 (NAS)

Now doesn't that sound like a God who wishes us to reason with Him, to discern His nature? Why, then, must those who consider the issue of the 'eternalness' of hell so critical, regard it unimportant to use rationality when considering the nature of a God unto whom they are ready to attribute such seeming unconcern as to have developed a creation and man upon it, and then watch as that which He has begotten enters into a path which will lead to eternal damnation in unending fire and torment for not only one 'forever' but two (forever *and* ever)?

I cite the exponents of the 'eternal hell' concept with the following errors in their thinking:

1) they do greatly "err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" - at least fully;

2) they fail to recognize the differences between the soul and the spirit;

3) hell is confused with other terms used in the Scriptures such as 'outer darkness', Sheol and Hades, Gehenna and the 'second death';

4) they seem to have no recognition of God as

the Father of all spirits (Zech. 12:1, Heb. 12:9 and Rom. 1:20);

5) they refuse to understand the difference between salvation (preservation) and perfection and perfecting;

6) they fail to fully appreciate the concept of remedial suffering;

7) such have a bad understanding of salvation as being for the soul only;

8) they seem to confuse the difference between being saved and being a disciple, and therefore they

9) fail to comprehend what is meant in the seemingly contradictory scriptures which say that 'salvation is a free gift of God', and those that speak of the promises of rewards to the overcomers at the time of Christ's return; and

10) many such people also fail to see that judgment can either be favorable or punative. A judge of a beauty contest would not be seen as punitive when he grants the crown to the winner. These concepts will be developed as we progress.

I have never thought of myself as a 'universalist' nor do I believe that salvation as we know it in this 'age of Grace' is the goal for all spirits before the Great White Throne judgment. Moreover, just because most translations speak of both heaven and hell as being 'eternal' does not mean that if you limit such concepts to an era or eras of time, you therefore immediately limit such promises of life or judgment from entering into another era or eras. Just because God closed the 'age of the Law' and His work with the Jews to enter into a new 'age of Grace' with His newborn church, did that limit the scope of His judgment unto the Jews or His promises unto Abraham and to "*thy seed after thee in their generations*"? If we are promised life to last 'eternally' and that eternally is shown to be but 'age lasting', does that limit God from adding to that life which I have secured in *this* era, other glories and dimensions in the new

era. It is in this age of sin and God's promise of judgment that I must make it through. If I have secured life for this age and make it unto the time of His new "heavens and earth", shall I not then be qualified to enter that life and its glories? This concept we shall also develop.

Again, my purpose is, at the minimum, to show forth that those of our church are not 'deviants' or outside of Christianity (so-called). I would be happy if you would merely accept the legitimacy of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you should disagree, however, I shall not 'lose any sleep' over the matter, for the Lord is the final Judge. And, "who are you to judge another man's servant?"

So. let us proceed. . . .

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Chapter I

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF CRITICISM:

What the 'theologians' say about

HELL

"The blight of the Pharisee's heart in olden times was doctrine without love. With the teachings of the Pharisees Christ had little quarrel, but with the pharisaic spirit He carried on unceasing warfare to the end. It was religion that put Christ on the cross, religion without the indwelling Spirit. It is no use to deny that Christ was crucified by persons who would today be called Fundamentalists. This should prove most disquieting if not downright distressing to us who pride ourselves on our orthodoxy. An unblessed soul filled with the letter of truth may actually be worse off than a pagan kneeling before a fetish."

- A.W. Tozer

In his book THE EARLY CHRISTIANS, Eberhard Arnold had this to say about the martyr, Polycarp:

"When he was led forward, the proconsul asked him if he was Polycarp. This he affirmed. The proconsul wanted to persuade him to deny his faith, urging him, "Consider your great age," and all the other things

they usually say in such cases. "Swear by the genius of Caesar; change your mind. Say, 'Away with the atheists.'" Polycarp, however, looked with a serious expression upon the whole mob assembled in the arena. He waved his hand over them, sighed deeply, looked up to heaven, and said, "Away with the atheists.""

(pp. 68)

"But in addition to the direct problem of non-Christian cults is the disturbing problem of doctrinal deviations within the pale of orthodox Christianity itself.... The deviation is universal reconciliation, or just plain old-fashioned Universalism...."

- Walter Martin

"...on a homosexual church's eligibility for membership in the National Counsel of Churches, the council's 260-member governing board aired sharply divergent views....

The membership in question was that of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), a 27,000-member denomination founded in 1968 by homosexuals as a haven for gay Christians."

- CHRISTIANITY TODAY
June 17, 1983

"The Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church has ruled that church law allows homosexuals to be Methodist preachers. The nine-member council, meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, in November, said the Methodist Book of Discipline does not forbid homosexuals from being ordained as ministers.

Earlier last year Methodist bishop Melvin E. Wheatley, Jr., of the Rocky Mountain Conference, chose an avowed homosexual as minister of a church in Denver. He explained homosexuality is not a sin. His appointment was later approved by an investigating committee of seven ordained minsters."

- CHARISMA, Feb., 1983

(NOTE: This same ruling has been adopted or forthcoming by many of the so-called 'main-line' churches such as Episcopal and Presbyterian, as well as others. - J.R.W.)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence (is not homosexuality self-indulgence? J.R.W.)." *You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"*

- Jesus, Matt. 23:25,24

What hypocrisy! What travesty for conscientious Christians to be labelled 'deviants' for questioning the "eternalness of hell"! Yet the members and leaders of mainline and evangelical churches are considered legitimate in their faith while accepting deviant and outright perverse behavior not only in their membership, but even the ordination of those who practice such into the ministry! What a state of affairs that exists in the churches when those who have legitimate concerns regarding some of the 'sacred cow' doctrines within the church become labelled 'deviants' but the 'camel' of homosexuality in the ministry is swallowed down so smoothly, along with a mouthful of other perverse practices such as adultery, incest, communism, the support of

Marxist revolutionaries, and more!

But alas, such has been the sorry state of affairs throughout various sad phases of church history. The Reformation saw those who were calling for reform burned at the stake, as did the Great Inquisition, and in other places and times similar persecution has been directed at those who have dared to challenge established doctrine within the church - doctrine which often was canonized by councils and people who were very questionable in their motives and behavior.

Such is the case with the topic under discussion, 'is hell eternal?' The questioning as to whether hell is an unending process has been a source of teaching and concern since the earliest church fathers. This will be shown as we progress in this historical survey. Attempts to discredit it have been initiated in each century, but it has continued to break forth as a nagging and unresolved question - all the rantings against it by its opponents notwithstanding.

But, remember, I do not consider myself a 'universalist' in the sense that it has been pigeonholed and labeled by its critics. As the reader progresses in this study, that distinction will become self-evident. However, there is no doubt about this fact: I do not accept that 'hell' is a process of unending torment in a lake of fire where souls are somehow kept supernaturally alive "*for ever AND ever*" so that they might be punished for sins committed in their short life span on earth. If that makes me a 'universalist' in the sight of our modern day scribes and Pharisees, then so be it. It is not that I cannot accept the concept that God can do such a thing or that He should be unquestioned in all that He wishes, but rather that I do not believe that His Holy Scriptures teach such a monstrous concept. You, dear reader, will have to decide for yourself, but this I ask again: please afford others the "benefit of the doubt" and accept the potential that they are true believers in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the

world, even if you still have doubts about such a doctrine. The important thing is our confession of the deity of Christ and His Atonement, etc. Unto our critics I say, 'Turn your criticisms against more worthy adversaries that are attacking its very core!'

THE HISTORICAL SURVEY

Rather than trying to produce my own history of this debate, I have decided to draw heavily upon some already existing material. Not only will this aid my purpose, but will provide the reader with the security of a more unbiased opinion in research. Therefore, I will be quoting extensively from some articles in a January 1979 issue of the THEMELIOS journal (an international journal for theological students) and particularly from the artical entitled Universalism: a historical survey by Richard J. Bauckham.

Dr. Bauckham begins by relating that the history of the doctrine of universal salvation (or *apokastastasis*) is a remarkable one. It appears that until the nineteenth century almost all Christian theologians among the so-called theological 'mainstream' taught the concept of eternal torment in hell. Here and there, outside that 'theological mainstream', were some who believed that the wicked would be finally annihilated (generally speaking, this is the doctrine of 'conditional immortality'). Then came the advocates of universal salvation, who, states Dr. Bauckham, "included some major theologians of the early church". Though 'eternal punishment' was firmly asserted in official creeds and confessions of the churches of early church history and through the Dark Ages, since 1800 this situation has entirely changed, and, according to Dr. Bauckham, "no traditional Christian doctrine has been so widely abandoned as that of eternal punishment".

Thus by 1914, H.R. Mackintosh could write: "If at this moment a frank and confidential plebiscite of the English-speaking ministry were taken, the likelihood is that a considerable majority would adhere to Universalism. They may no doubt shrink from it as a dogma, but they would cherish it privately as at least a hope." That must make many theologians holding a different view quite discouraged and explain the fervor with which they attack this doctrine. The more they try to do away with it, the more it springs forth by the 'hope' and 'simple belief' resident within the many Christian believers who cannot accept the 'monstrous concept of God' as set forth in many "official" church doctrines concerning 'eternal damnation'. It causes us to remember the Roman Catholic Church's attempt to silence Galileo, and many others who preceded Luther and the Reformation. But the truth cannot be killed out, or if it is (like Christ was crucified by the Jews who sought to get rid of the Light), it will merely be resurrected anew.

Bauckham also states: "The alternative interpretation of hell as annihilation seems to have prevailed even among many of the more conservative theologians. Among the less conservative, universal salvation, either as hope or as dogma, is now so widely accepted that many theologians assume it virtually without argument."

Again, it seems that the history of this issue is a complex one, "partly because the issue of hell and universalism is closely interconnected with other difficult and debated theological issues, such as predestination and free will, the validity of retributive punishment, the authority of the Bible, and the nature of God, the meaning of and the relationship between His love and His justice." It appears that the issue of universal salvation is not related to these other issues in certain ways. Augustine and Calvin held that the basis for a doctrine of hell was absolute predestination while Schleiermacher held it to be univer-

sal salvation. Conversely, free will has been held to support C.S. Lewis' view of hell, and Origen's view of universalism. Advocates of 19th century universalism frequently emphasized the role of retributive punishment in their scheme, but more modern universalists often reject hell as a result of rejecting the idea of retributive punishment. The problem of universalism, therefore, cannot be reduced to a simple choice of alternatives. Dr. Bauckham says that "only the belief that ultimately all men will be saved is common to all universalists. The rationale for that belief and the total theological context in which it belongs vary considerably." As I have already stated, I am not in agreement that such concepts define my beliefs.

ORIGEN and the Early Church

Origen was the most famous and influential advocate of universalism in the early church, whose teaching about universalism was anticipated by his predecessor, Clement of Alexandria. Origen's universalism depended on his hermeneutical method of discerning the allegorical sense of Scripture behind the literal sense. This method of scriptural teaching seems also to be rejected by our modern day theologians. One Methodist doctor of divinity with whom I had a close personal contact told me that scripture could only be interpreted by the use of two standards: the Word of God and the consensus of the religious community! I looked at him when he told me this and said, "I'm glad that Our Lord didn't view things that way, or He would have waited a long time to have secured the consensus of the religious community of His day!"

According to Origen, *"all intelligent beings (men, angels, devils) were created good and equal, but with absolute free will. Some, through the misuse of free will, turned from God and fell into varying degrees of sin. Those who fell furthest*

became the devils, those whose fall was less disastrous became the souls of men. These are to be restored to God through a process of discipline and chastisement, for which purpose this material world has been created and the preexisting souls incarnated in human bodies. The process of purification is not complete at death but continues after this life. Nor is it an inevitability but continues after this life. Nor is it an inevitably upward path: the soul remains free to choose good or evil, and so even after this life may fall again as well as rise. Within this scheme punishment is always, in God's intention, remedial: God is wholly good and His justice serves no other purpose than His good purpose of bringing all souls back to Himself. Thus the torments of hell cannot be endless, though they may last for aeons; the soul in hell remains always free to repent and be restored."

Bruce J. Nicholls says that *"universalism does not necessarily deny the reality of hell, but it does look beyond it to the restoration of all things and the redemption of all men."* It seems that Origen held that Christ remains on the cross as long as one sinner remains in hell. I don't pretend to know with finality what Origen meant by such a concept, but I for one believe that Christ rose triumphant over death and hell and the Cross. Therefore, if Origen were a true believer in Christ and His atoning work, which now seems to be accepted, then I can't but believe that he was speaking allegorically - a method he employed in his understanding of Scripture. If so, he must have been implying that Christ's work would not be true if we were to avoid the clear-cut statements of the Lord on the Cross that "it is finished" (all the work pertaining to the atonement necessary to redeem mankind). An interesting side note to history is that I have been told that Origen was eventually martyred, but centuries later canonized. If that report is correct, then I find these words by A.W. Tozer even more

revealing: *"To such men as this the church owes a debt too heavy to pay. The curious thing is that she seldom tries to pay him while he lives, but the next generation builds his sepulcher and writes his biography, as if instinctively and awkwardly to discharge an obligation the previous generation to a large extent ignored."*

In recent years, attempts have been made to link all universalists with the teachings of the cults emerging from India and other areas of the East. The implication is, of course, that you are guilty by association of similarity. This I reject. Does similarity in doctrine with non-Christian beliefs, imply 'wrongness' of doctrine or common origin or even 'theft' or plagiarism? For example, I have read that water baptism is not unknown in ancient and modern religious beliefs among non-Christian peoples. Are we then to deny the doctrine of water baptism? Other authorities have shown that mother-child worship was common to Babylonian and other cultures. Does that make the Virgin birth suspect? Some would say so, but I do not swallow such camels.

Enemies of Christianity as the only true means to salvation and those who question the deity of Christ use the same tactics to discredit many of the important foundation truths regarding the identity of Christ. Truth is truth and it does not matter who has it or portions of it. Balaam was a prophet of God and understood many of the things of God and offered one of the first Messianic prophecies recorded in the Scriptures, yet he was not of Israel. Before the Mosaic Law and the establishment of the nation of Israel, God spoke to many men and revealed His nature and primitive ordinances to them. Surely we can accept that Ishmael would have carried many truths with him as he became the 'father of many nations'. And what about the sons of Adam, and of Noah, etc.? Resident within the beliefs of many people of the earth may be the vestiges of real truth. Yes, it

is impure and corrupt and I reject it as having any import to me and for establishing doctrine. But, my point is that just because there is a similarity in a particular doctrine held by some Christians, does not mean that they are to be associated with such impure and demonic groups. When the ecclesiastical authorities of the only recognized Christian church of Galileo's day refused to accept the fact that the world was round, did that make it so? Let us use our God-given intelligence and evaluate each idea on it's ability to withstand the true measure - its conformance with God's Word.

The doctrine of the final restoration of all souls seems to have been not uncommon during the 4th and 5th centuries in the region of the church which has become known as the Orthodox church. It was clearly taught by Gregory of Nyssa and is attributed to Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and some Nestorian theologians. Still others, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, considered it to be an open question. It is Augustine (by whom the followers of Calvinist teachings are influenced), who took the trouble to refute versions of universalism, as well as views of the extent of salvation which stopped short of universalism but were more generous than his own. Augustine seems to have emerged as the accepted spokesman on this and other doctrines still held as 'untouchable' within orthodox Christianity today. However, there are many who have openly questioned the complete reliability of many of Augustine's assumptions in other areas of his doctrine. Yet, as the expression goes, "tradition sticks like sin".

Bauckham brings out that "Origen's universalism was involved in the group of doctrines known as 'Origenism', about which there were long controversies in the Eastern church structure. A Council at Constantinople in 543 condemned a list of Origenist errors including *Apokatastasis*, but whether this condemnation was endorsed by the

Fifth Ecumenical Council (533) seems in doubt. At any rate, the condemnation of Origenism discredited universalism in the theological tradition of the Eastern church structure. "In the West(ern part of the church structure, located in Rome), not only Origen's ...reputation but also Augustine's enormous influence ensured that the Augustinian version of the doctrine of hell prevailed almost without question for many centuries." And so we see that Origen is rejected and Augustine is exalted. Thus to hold Augustine's view became the orthodox way of believing regarding hell, and to accept anything like unto Origen ran one the risk of being branded a heretic, pantheist or radical.

16th - 18th Centuries

Theologians have brought out that the 16th and 17th centuries saw a great amount of intellectual and religious upheaval and thus produced a lot of religious opinions as well as changes in secular thinking. Even a few 16th century Anabaptists and Spiritualists, notably John Denck, were universalists. During this era, universalism seemed to be partly a reaction to the particularism of high Calvinism which held that atonement was limited and excluded any kind of divine will for the salvation of all men. Revulsion grew against this view of the apparent cruelty of the God who created "the reprobate for no other purpose than to damn him". This rejection led to excesses in the view of God's grace (such as Arminianism) which seems to have added to the fears of those who are critics of the idea of a remedial hell, etc.

Another reason promoting universalism during this time period seems to have been the Renaissance and a new interest in Plato. Such renewals led to "an interest in Origen and the early Greek fathers, who could plausibly be thought to represent a form of Christian doctrine earlier, and

therefore purer, than Augustine, to whom the Calvinists appealed." Now that last quote from Dr. Bauckham is indeed worthy of meditation, yet he seems to have passed over it so quickly and glibly. After all, is it not logical to assume that the closer in time to Christ and His Apostles, the greater opportunity to have had the truth "straight from the horse's mouth"? No, I am not saying that that insures that such is so, but it is worthy of consideration.

Out of Cambridge came such men who rejected the established view of hell in their day. Jeremiah White held to the scheme of *"emanation and return, the preexistence of souls, and the remedial character of all punishment. The love of God is His supreme attribute. His wrath is an aspect of His love, directed not against the sinner but against the sin. So the sinner's torment in hell will be the agony of enduring God's holy burning love until his sins are burned up and he himself is pure."*

At the end of the 17th century, universalism also emerged among some of the German Pietists, and was popularized in the 18th century by an English devotional writer named William Law.

Bauckham says that one very strong objection to universalism in those centuries was the deep-rooted belief that the threat of eternal torment was a necessary deterrent from immorality during this life. Now here we are getting to one of the important criticisms of the opponents of a remedial hell, even to this day. They argue that if you do away with an 'unending torment in fire forever' view of hell, then you take away the fear element that has kept people in line for centuries. That is, admittedly, an over simplification, but it helps to make my point. Such reasoning is understandable, but greatly flawed. This objection by critics of universalism was so strong, that those who believed in universal salvation held that their belief must remain an esoteric, secret doctrine for the few, while hell must continue to be preached as a deterrent for the masses.

Even later, in the 19th century when esotericism was more indefensible, universalists found it necessary to meet this objection by emphasizing the severity and length of the torments which the wicked must endure before their eventual salvation. As one who has been put through the ringer for my beliefs, I can readily understand such practices and fears of the hostility of the ecclesiastical authorities of our day. May God give us the boldness to resist such intimidation as did those who gave up their lives to bring Reformation to the church of Jesus Christ!

The 19th Century

It is stated that F.S.E. Schleiermacher was the first great theologian of modern times to teach universalism. He taught a predestination as absolute as Augustine and Calvin, however, he rejected any concept of double predestination. He believed that all men are elected to salvation in Christ, and that such a purpose of divine omnipotence cannot fail (this was a sort of "reformed universalism" founded upon the all-determining will of God). Schleiermacher rejected what he saw as the capriciousness of the Calvinist God who would arbitrarily elect only some men to salvation.

Schleiermacher also held another interesting view that opposed any notion of hell being unlimited. He had a deeply felt conviction that the blessedness of the redeemed would be severely marred by their sympathy for the damned. This is precisely the opposite of the conviction of earlier theologians who held that the blessedness of the redeemed would actually be enhanced by their contemplation of the torments of the damned! (!?) Even here Dr. Bauckham is hard pressed to not acknowledge the argument for such a view of justice. He states "the modern Christian's instinctive sympathy with Schleiermacher's contrary view places him on Schleiermacher's side of a great transition

in the history of attitudes to suffering. With Schleiermacher we now feel that even the justly inflicted suffering of other men must be pitied, not enjoyed. Schleiermacher's argument is typically modern in its appeal and is one element in the increasing popularity of universalism since his day." Here we see by these last statements that the implication is drawn that unless you believe in an unlimited hell, you are an apostate modernist. Such implications should be rejected and a concept of truth evaluated, accepted or rejected on its ability to withstand the light of God's Word. It's as if he has to begrudgingly credit Schleiermacher with some sound points, yet reject it because it is too "typically modern".

Schleiermacher had few successors, but the matter became of widespread concern, particularly in England. Controversies broke out and some men were dismissed from their posts and hounded for holding similar views. However, there was a general uneasiness with the traditional doctrine of hell which led to arguments for conditional immortality; to undogmatic hopes for universal salvation, and a concept that man's fate is not necessarily sealed at death, but that the intermediate state offers fresh opportunities for attaining salvation.

During this period, the most common of all versions of the 'wider hope' was the hope that death was not the decisive break which traditional orthodoxy had taught. Again, Bauckham explains the view at that time, "Repentance, conversion, moral progress are still possible after death. This widespread belief was certainly influenced by the common 19th century faith in evolutionary progress. Hell...could be understood in this context as the pain and suffering necessary to moral growth."

The 20th Century

Some changes seem to have marked the transition

from the Victorian era to our modern age in the realm of universalist thought, suggests Bauckham. "Almost all universalists before this century thought it necessary to argue for a universalist interpretation of those texts of the New Testament which seem to teach eternal punishment or final condemnation, and the standard approach to such texts was to deny the everlasting or final character of the punishment.... The nineteenth century debates always included extensive exegetical discussions, especially over the meaning of *aionios*." However, Bauckham believes that exegesis has turned against the universalist case in this century. But as if to contradict his own beliefs, Dr. Bauckham then states, "The more liberal approach to Scripture has probably played quite a large part in the general spread of universalism in this century"! Here is where I must again interject. There is a repeated attempt to associate anyone who believes that hell is other than unending, with "more liberal approaches". The implication is, as previously mentioned, to discredit the validity of what is presented by associating it with "deviant" theology. I am not liberal in thought regarding my view of the world nor in my theology (as the word is commonly used). I would be considered quite fundamental and conservative. But I do believe in the justice of God and, more importantly, the truth as it is taught in the Bible. If accepting that God uses hell as a remedial tool, rather than as an instrument with which to keep people supernaturally alive through unending cycles of time to punish them for their sins during a short time on earth gets me branded "liberal" - so be it!

It appears that any discussion of 'universalism' involving this century needs to include mention of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. Although neither are labeled as strictly universalists, both regarded the final salvation of all mankind as a possibility which cannot be denied, though they felt that it cannot be dogmatically asserted either. Bauckham believes that this was "a significant point beyond

traditional theology, which always asserted not only that final condemnation is a real possibility but also that some men will actually be lost." He also feels that their position "has probably had more appeal to conservative Christians (including Roman Catholic theologians) than dogmatic universalism; it allows us to hope for the salvation of all men without presuming to know something which God has not revealed." Now to me those statements are a collection of double talk or "mental gymnastics". Barth maintained that the *"rejection which sinful man deserves, God has taken upon Himself in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ all men are elected to salvation. He is therefore in the true sense the only rejected one. Predestination thus becomes not an equivocal doctrine of God's Yes and No, but a fully evangelical doctrine of God's unqualified Yes to man. The reality of man - of all men - is that in Jesus Christ the reconciliation of all has taken place. The Gospel brings to men the knowledge of what is already true of them: that in Jesus Christ they are already elect, justified, reconciled."*

It could be surmised that this line of thought logically entails universalism, like unto Schleiermacher's doctrine of universal election, but Barth refused to follow this logic. Instead, Barth maintains that the *"unbeliever's true reality is that he is elect, but he denies that reality and attempts to change it, to be instead the rejected man. In this perverse attempt (it is no more than an attempt) he lives under the threat of final condemnation, which would be God's acquiescence in his refusal to be the reconciled man he really is."* But universal salvation still is maintained as an open possibility "for which we may hope". Such statements reinforce my belief that even the critics of such a doctrine have to begrudgingly admit certain possibilities that hell may not be all that traditional thought has ascribed unto it.

Emil Brunner also reached the conclusion that universalism must remain an open question, but by

a different route. He believes that *"we must take quite seriously the two categories of New Testament texts: those which speak of a final decisive division of men at the Last Judgment, and those which speak of God's single unqualified will for the salvation of all men. The two are logically incompatible and are not to be artificially reconciled by attributing to God a dual will (double predestination) or by eliminating the finality of judgment."*

Brunner seems to sum up his opinions with this thought: *"To the question 'Is there such a thing as a final loss or is there a universal salvation?' there is no answer, because the Word of God 'is a Word of challenge, not of doctrine'."* You, dear reader, will have to determine if you can accept such 'illustrious' conclusions by renowned men, but I for one find such reasoning not only shallow but incredible.

There are other men of this century who have espoused a universalist concept, but only J.A.T. Robinson and John Hick seem to have received much attention. And to a large extent, the conservative theologians seem to have written them off as near heretical and/or too affected by Eastern thought.

However, Bauckham says that "more than most other modern forms of universalism, Hick's bears a striking resemblance to both the Origenist and Victorian types, in that he envisages this life as merely the first stage in a long - in many cases, unimaginably long - post-mortem progress towards final salvation. Within this process, hellish (or more properly purgatorial) experiences take their place. In his most recent work, Hick...sketches a highly speculative account of the many subsequent lives through which men will pass in their gradual approximation to the divine purpose." (Death and Eternal Life, ch. 20.)

The Problem with Exegesis -

Cemetaries or Seminaries?

I have purposely presented a 'bundle' of thought that has been presented down through the Church age to show the reader that the subject under discussion is one that has been widely debated for centuries. Therefore, to be dogmatic about it, or to make glib comments about those who seek a more biblically sound doctrine about the subject of hell, is a real injustice. Such scholarly debates, as I have just submitted the reader to, should make us question the authority by which many theologians speak.

Exegesis is defined as the "explanation of the language and thought of a literary work; especially biblical exposition or interpretation." Such sounds valid, but when we consider the sad state of the church in this Laodicean age, we can well reflect upon an intentional slip of words I once heard Leonard Ravenhill make in describing our modern day centers of religious learning. In a reference to seminaries, he excused himself for having first said 'cemetaries'. Yes, there are lifeless, dead thoughts and concepts coming out of such places, for they are ever seeking - but never coming to "the knowledge of the truth". Yet, such prestigious institutions and their theologians can arrive at the opinion that the Scriptures do not condemn homosexuality, violent revolution, etc. Again, I thunder - HYPOCRITES!

Thus, the information presented should be sufficient to validate the thought that opposition to the 'eternalness of hell' has a legitimate place within the corridors we accept as 'legitimate Christianity'. The critic may think within himself, "methinks the man doth protest too much" or that I am making more of the issue than truly exists. Some may try to argue that holding a differing view on the 'eternalness of hell' from that which is held by 'traditional Christianity' does

not mean rejection and threats of damnation unto such as question such a view. Unto such I submit the following excerpts from letters sent to me and some of those whom I have pastored.

"Dear.....,

I am writing to you as a friend who is deeply concerned about your spiritual welfare. It is apparent to me that you are in great spiritual danger. The group you are in is not preaching the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, but another gospel. This is no rash judgment. I talked with your leader, Jon Welker, in depth (an exaggeration, JW) *a few years ago. I know what he teaches. He is telling lies in the name of the Lord. His god, who is all love and no wrath, is not the God of the Bible, but the figment of man's imagination. Jon is deceiving you and is no doubt deceived himself. I do not hesitate to call him a false prophet. He's under the curse of Almighty God! Your shepherds are guilty of two serious errors: (1) They reject the teaching that many shall suffer forever for their sins. (2) They do not understand and they do not correctly preach the death of Christ, which is the heart of the Gospel."*

This individual then goes on to try and prove that *'aionios'* means forever and that all scholars agree to that. His primary source is a Greek dictionary (not lexicon) and the commentaries of men. He then ends with these comments to elicit fear:

"Their errors will damn your souls if you do not forsake them. The curse of Revelation 22:18-19 applies to Jon Welker and all like him who deny what the Book of Revelation clearly teaches, that God is a God of wrath as well as love and has prepared an eternal hell for the devil and his children. All who deny the hell which Revelation describes will experience it! Only those, such as myself, who ADMIT THAT THEY DESERVE TO GO TO HELL

and trust in Christ's perfect work of redemption will find themselves in heaven. All others are idolaters (because they worship a god they have invented instead of the One described in the Bible) and will therefore wake up one day in hell - UNLESS THEY REPENT. Please LISTEN to me: I WARN YOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU ALL. Reject lies! Receive the Truth!"

K.F., April 20, 1979

The letter is peppered with misconceptions of what I have taught and what the Scriptures reveal and conversations regarding God's love and the length of hell. One example of such is the implication that I don't believe in the 'holy wrath' of God. I have no problem with that concept, but it is the motivation for such with which I differ from such individuals as this one whom I have just quoted.

Another letter to me regarding the same subject ends with these remarks:

"But I know that your sin-darkened mind cannot accept what they say unless it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit."

Yes, everyone needs the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, but I take issue with the condescension of this indiviudal. Truth alone will judge us.

Before me I also have two tracts of "The Puritan Evangelical Fellowship" that also focus on the wrathful nature of God and stresses that "another gospel" is anyone who teaches that hell is not forever and ever whereby God pours out His wrath in unending torment of souls who have not come to acceptance of Him, etc.

I cannot take any more space to quote from such items that have come my way, but those already given should be enough to convince the reader of the 'either/or attitude of some proponents of the eternalness of hell' concept.

Impressions from the Historical Survey of Concepts Toward Hell

The predominate teaching among Christendom is that every spirit is fresh from the mother's womb with no prior existence whatsoever. (However, look at Psalm 58:3 & Jeremiah 1:5.) This teaching also holds that the new spirit is pure until the age of responsibility is reached at usually around 12 years old. To such there is no pre-existence of the human spirit (even though Jesus, who is our Way, and Pattern, existed prior to INCARNATING in the lowly Babe at Bethlehem. The teaching usually goes along these lines: Unless you accept God in this lifetime, be it child, infant or whomsoever, you stand a good chance to be lost throughout time unending. (Some exempt children under 12.) If, after the age of 12, you do not accept Christ and die an unbeliever, you can be cast into the fire of hell to burn forever AND ever, time without end.

In addition, some maintain that God has created some spirits for honor and some for dishonor (vessels of honor or dishonor) and therefore there are some people walking on the earth today that are predestined for hell, no matter what they do. Often quoted are the Scriptures dealing with "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" These individuals who are predestined for hell, after they have gone through this grief experienced during life and who have caused grief for others, will then go to the Lake of Fire to burn and burn time without end. Some are the seed of Satan. Fire and Brimstone are their destiny ETERNALLY. All do not maintain this attitude about hell exactly as I have outlined it, but usually it is some variant thereof.

Questions to be Considered. . .

Here are some questions to be considered with such an idea of God's plan and purpose of hell in mind. Please keep in mind that the Scriptures repeatedly state that God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11, Eph. 6:9, Deut. 10:17, I Pet. 1:17, etc.)

1. Why are some children born into rich families while others are born poor?

2. Why are some born male and some female if there is neither male nor female in God's realm? (It must be remembered that the plight of women has been different from men down through the ages.)

3. Why are some born intelligent and some mentally retarded if God is no respecter of persons? Some artists, while others unable to draw (and the same with all talents)?

4. Why did God tell Joshua and others to go in and kill every man, woman and child and everything that breathed in the Old Testament times? The old ones we could understand, but the children and the animals?? Christians - wake up and think!

5. Why are some born black, others white, some red others yellow, when each receives different experiences while on earth? Some cultures enlarge the chances that the gospel is going to be presented at least once to its citizens.

6. Why are some allowed to live but a few moments and some 70 years or more?

7. What happens to the 13 year old not accepting Christ when and if he dies at that age - does he go to hell and the Lake of Fire? Etc., etc.

8. What happens to the 70 year old who does accept Christ on his death bed? Is he spared? Why is he given more years to come to repentance and to make the decision than the younger one if God is no respecter of persons, and the spirit is fresh at the time of birth?

9. Why are some nations prosperous while others not? Remember that each environment will provide different circumstances and God is no respecter of persons.

These and other questions come to mind if we "reason together" with God as He commanded through His prophet Isaiah (Isa. 1:18).

We should now be able to proceed with a heightened desire to know the Truth concerning this highly debated subject. Again, I doubt that a strongly entrenched opinion is going to be dislodged if the reader begins with such a determined attitude to reject before considering, but my purpose is to present enough that our critics will be left with something to think about and to (hopefully) be less quick to brand us 'deviant'. May you thoughtfully consider the presentation which follows.

Chapter II

SHEOL, HADES and GEHENNA

In the Old Testament, the Bible of the Hebrews, we find only one common word rendered 'hell', namely, the word SHEOL. Stripped of its acquired connotation of 'fire and brimstone', Sheol simply means "a chamber". Materalistic minds could conceive of nothing aside from the physical body, therefore, the cave, the tomb or grave became that 'chamber' (Sheol) to which the dead went.

I will now begin to quote and/or paraphrase several portions of works by Mr. Mikkel Dahl of Canada. Such a presentation will, I believe, best answer many of the concepts and criticisms which I have brought out in the previous sections of this book. Mr. Dahl's works were first copyrighted in the 1950's.

In the process of time the writings by the Hebrew prophets were translated into Greek. This was reportedly done around three hundred years before the Christian Era. "The Greek rendering of Sheol became Hades. The word's meaning enlarges slightly on the 'chamber' connotation of Sheol, expanding into "an underworld for the dead". Its simple meaning is but that of the 'UNSEEN' (world). Wherefore, the Old Testament passages rendered 'hell' in the A.V. (Authorized Version), merely referred to the 'chambers' of the 'UNseen' world into which departed the 'souls' of the dead. Emphatically is it here stated that nowhere in the O.T. prophets do we find the concept of torment associated with their 'sheol'. Only through 'type' and associations therewith can suffering be linked to Sheol. These

associated thoughts will be considered as we progress."

"The Valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem, wherein refuse, garbage and sometimes dead bodies were burned, became known as Gehenna (the Land of Hinnom). In the New Testament of the Christians, the Lord Jesus Christ introduced this word in connection with life beyond the grave. And, in the metaphorical sense He used it, linking suffering to it; although primarily, destruction. Yet suffering is the usual forerunner to destruction. We also find our Lord speaking of "eonian fire" (Matt. 25:41), while in the final 'Revelation' book of our New Testament, the "lake of fire" is introduced." All these thoughts will also be considered as we progress.

EVOLUTION OF THE HELL CONCEPT

"Belief in and concepts of 'hell' common in our day, are principally - if not entirely - peculiar to Christendom. However, that fact by itself does not disprove 'hell'. Nevertheless, it is well that we should consider the origin of the doctrine - that we may better understand both its basis and falacies.

Back in the "Garden of Eden" where God warned Adam of the consequences of eating of the forbidden fruit, we find not the faintest allusion to any 'hell' awaiting him beyond death. GOD, as a compassionate and loving Father (IF such we assume Him to be), would, logically, have most sternly warned Adam then and there of the 'HELL' into which he would precipitate both himself and his progeny - were he ever to eat of forbidden fruit. Yet we find not the faintest hint that such a warning was ever sounded. WHY?"

"According to the revered Record, God Himself formed man 'in His own image'. Then He goes on to tell us the law of genetics, how all the species 'brought forth after their own kind'. By this we

know that the highest and noblest which has ever been manifest by a human parent, is but THE VERY NATURE OF GOD - finding expression in His own spirit offspring.

Let us assume that a truly noble, human parent has a son. Later when the son has arrived at a measure of understanding, the father tells him that in the house is an unlocked door marked 'FORBIDDEN'. All places he may go; full liberty is his, yet the door 'Forbidden' must never be opened. Should he ever enter, he will 'understand' and 'die'.

In process of time, the young, married man's curiosity gets the best of him: he enters upon his father's secret! As the father learns thereof, he banishes the son from his estate; yet that is not enough: he decrees that the son must be tormented, and that without ever ceasing. Yet this is not sufficiently satisfying vengeance for the old man; for, he decrees that the resources of his estate must command the services of the world's best doctors to keep his son alive indefinitely - in order that he may suffer torment 'everlastingly'! Yet this, too, is not sufficient for the old rich man! Wherefore, he further decrees that all children of the exiled son must similarly be put through sadistic and monstrous torment 'everlastingly' to and through the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, AS WELL AS THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE UNCEASING LAPS OF THE COSMIC TIDE!

Who has ever heard of such a 'good' and 'noble' father among the children of men? What Hitler or what monstrous pagan would not shudder and revolt in horror at such an unthinkable demon in human form? Yet the foregoing is but a miniature portrait of the 'God' of Christendom (according to the common dogmas)!

Nevertheless, let us not fall into the error of creating God according to our own imagination; but rather let our fearless reasoning which exposes the fiendish nightmares of a stygian night, become our spur and incentive to an unrelenting SEARCH

FOR TRUTH - YIELDING JOY AND PEACE THROUGH UNDERSTANDING, AND HONOR UNTO OUR 'FATHER'.

The only extensive Old Testament reference to 'hell' of which I am aware, is to be found in Ezekiel, chapters 31 - 32:

> "The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell (Sheol) with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword."
>
> Ezek. 32:21

If the reader will carefully peruse both these chapters of Ezekiel (32 - 33), the most exhaustive Old Testament statement about Sheol and the 'Pit' will be found, yet there is not the faintest hint about suffering, and assuredly not about 'torment' WHY? Because God never spoke to His prophets about the 'torments of the damned'! Insofar as the revered Record goes, the Lord Jesus was the first to associate suffering with the afterlife; while the dogmas of 'hell' were later inventions.

Back through the eons of recorded time, education was the privilege of the favored few. In the days of Moses and the Hebrew people, the knowledge of 'letters' became the privilege of the Levitical priesthood. Since they were the Divinely appointed custodians of the Law, 'learning' became their lot. And this selfsame priesthood had "the power of life and death" among their own people. Since the common mass among them was without understanding of 'letters' (the alphabet), they became dependent on the priesthood for an "interpretation of the Law"; in fact, for their every concept of life and conduct aside from the most elementary. Thus did the Jewish priesthood become both revered and FEARED.

In the days of Christianity's inception, Rome ruled Palestine. In every little detail, Rome was intimately acquainted with Jewish life, belief and practice. Then dawned the fateful year

of 70 AD when Roman legions under Titus invaded Palestine, bringing to complete ruin both the temple and the Jewish theocracy. After almost three centuries of persecution, Christianity was recognized by Rome, becoming its State Religion. At the time, the masses of its own people - and those of subjected nations - were of non-Jewish stock: they were not a people trained in the fear of Yahweh, but a grossly idolatrous and 'barbaric' people. Such were not easily 'handled'.

Although we have in our midst a church which claims "holy apostolic succession" for all of its 'popes' right back to St. Peter, any unbiased person can learn for oneself through the study of secular history that many of its popes were but selfish tyrants, wielding their powers in the interests of self and the church. We need not go so far as to wholly impugn their motives; we need go no further than to recognize that some of them had great ambition to 'Christianize' their vast, pagan citizenry. But HOW? FEAR has always been the super weapon used to cow the ignorant masses. Rome and her popes were not oblivious to the power resident in fear, fostered through ignorance. 'LOVE' was too slow a ferment (for them) to leaven the lump of pagan carnality. THEN was born the concept of throttling the people through FEAR. IGNORANCE had to be fostered to keep the masses in subjection. There were no printing presses, while education was scarce and rudimentary. So the "everlasting torments of hell" concept was used to frighten them into the ecclesiastic net from the one side, while a visionary and grandiose 'heaven' was the alluring 'REWARD' unto all the 'faithful' who would not desert the flock and *that* supported the financial coffers of the church. Thus the double-barreled weapon of HELL and Heaven brought its 'harvest' unto the church of Rome. . . .

But in the process of time an 'enemy' rose up in the form of the printing press. 'Education' made its inroads while portions of translated and printed Scripture appeared. Immediately the 'church'

forbade its communicants to read any portion of printed Scripture. As late as the 14th century in a 'civilized' land, the Archbishop of Canterbury threatened the "greater excommunication" upon any and all who might read publicly or privately any portion of Wycliffe's version, or any other! And as late as 1536 and 1555 AD, in the same 'civilized' land, William Tyndale and John Rogers were respectively burned at the stake for having translated the Scriptures (or portions thereof)! Were it not for the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of civil authorities which has throttled the power of ecclesiastical authorities, there would still be mass fryings in the name of Christ our Lord.

Such - in brief - is the history of the "dogma of Hell" and the lollypops on the pink ice cream train to 'Heaven'. Yet no believer in Christ Jesus can lightly reject 'hell' and its associated suffering; for, assuredly, the record shows that He spoke thereof. But our objective in viewing the origin of hell's dogma, is to better understand the extremities and monstrous teachings linked thereto (rather than to dismiss its thought). Having robbed it of its hysteria, we are in a state of mental quietude and awareness: enabling an assessment of God's true Word.

Since Jesus, whom we call Christ, is Christendom's prime authority for the concept of suffering as linked with hell, we shall first scrutinize His words to learn what He taught. Thereafter, we shall go back to Genesis and the Old Testament prophets to see how by 'TYPE' the same Truths are taught. And finally, in a consummation of the Vision Glorious, you shall walk with me through the Dark Domain to view in detail the 'souls in torment'; to look into the awesome depths of the "lake of fire" - from whence we shall soar through the star-studded mansions of LIGHT to gaze upon the "souls of the blessed" - in ecstacy enraptured in the GLORY OF HIS PRESENCE!"

Chapter III

"INTERPRETING" THE SCRIPTURE

Let me set before you the picture of a father. He has many children and vast possessions. The "business" of tending his estates and developing their resources is truly colossal. Add to this the fact that he employs vast numbers of men and women, and we can begin to grasp a portion of its endless ramifications, and interests involved.

We look now to his numerous and growing sons, from little toddlers well up into the teens. . . . May we not logically suppose that in that father's heart is a keen desire to see his sons eventually become a part and parcel of the "business management"? And may we not logically deduce that in view of the responsibilities he has in mind for them, that he will be vitally interested in both their education, as well as preparatory training to fit them for the posts ahead? And furthermore, as a man who has come up "the hard way", having suffered treachery within every quarter of his interest, estates and business, he will be keenly aware of the vital importance which INTEGRITY and CHARACTER play in man's relationship with man. Wherefore, we may rightly infer that he will also be attentive to that tutorship of his sons which deals with, or is fundamental to the inculcation of RIGHT PRINCIPLE.

Now for the sixty-four dollar question! Is it at all likely that he will personally speak to his sons in language which is beyond their understanding? That he will speak to them of HIGHLY VITAL ISSUES but use ambiguous words and involved speech which can only confuse their youthful and childish minds? That he will do this knowing full well that

as children with probing minds they will ask questions, seeking an explanation from this one and that one of his hired help; people with various perspectives and mental calibre who will give conflicting 'interpretations' to his involved statements? HARDLY!

As a man of attainments and vast responsibility, he will understand the vital importance of youthful minds absorbing THE CORRECT UNDERSTANDING of ALL which is in his heart to commit to them. THEREFORE WILL HE SPEAK CLEARLY! Have we not here a reasonably fair parallel to that of our "Heavenly Father"? Did not our Lord say: "IF a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father...; HOW MUCH MORE SHALL YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER GIVE...." (Lk. 11:11 - 13). Has He not suffered and survived the Lucifer rebellion in His Kingdom? And has He not portrayed impending posts of responsibility unto His chosen (see Matt. 19:28 and 25:21).

Yet our churches and their clergy from time immemorial have proclaimed that Scripture must be INTERPRETED! And that THEY are the chosen CUSTOIDANS of God's Truth; that those not of such rank must listen carefully to what THEY tell us, and BELIEVE whatever balderdash they concoct - lest our 'souls' enter into 'eternal torment'. THIS IS THE AGE OF SCIENCE! This is the era of man's INTELLECTUAL ASSERTION! These are the days of people "being FROM MISSOURI"! The parrotings of an ecclesiastical super conclave is destined to soon get drowned out and forever stilled in the unleashing of the little ATOM'S power, when the madness of man shall toss aside the pillars of Dagon's temple, that all which is not OF THE LIGHT may be destroyed!

But let us glance back to earlier days. Man's way of life was primitive. 'Education' was the exclusive privilege of the few. Then arrived the time that God selected Abram to father "a peculiar people unto Himself". In due time, God gave a REVELATION of Himself to man, together with commandments, laws and ordinances. The chosen recip-

ient was Moses: a man of great learning. Carefully did he record the communications received. Then was a certain tribe of Israel chosen to be the CUSTODIANS of God's Revelation and ordinances for man. Elected ones were ordained to the service. THAT entailed EDUCATION! They became known as the "scribes". Among them were the higher intellectuals who carefully studied the innumerable Laws and Ordinances; these became known as Masters of the Law, and eventually named "Lawyers". Let us bear in mind that the common mass of people had no appreciable education, and could neither read nor write! Thus were they forced (through ignorance) to be wholly dependent on a growing 'caste' among their own: DEPENDENT ON THEM FOR EVERYTHING PERTAINING TO GOD!

By the time that our Lord came to earth, this 'caste' had grown in number and power to the end that oppression stalked the land, and the Laws of God Almighty had degenerated to formal RITUALISM! Into the very teeth of this selfish and lordly caste did He hurl the most stinging of His rebukes:

> "WOE unto you scribes and Pharisees, HYPOCRITES! For ye devour widows' houses and FOR A PRETENCE make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation (judgment)."
>
> Matt. 23:14

Remember - beloved - how the fathers of our Christian Faith were devout MEMBERS OF THE SYNAGOGUE! Have not the children aped their mother? Have we not a vast 'caste' in our midst today who "devour widows' houses and for A PRETENCE MAKE LONG PRAYERS"? Or am I misinformed that this 'caste' has, and still does "offer long prayers" for a suitable fee, pretending (yes, CLAIMING) that such prayer will release the soul of some departed from "purgatory"?! (This is not intended as a broadside against one church, but against her numerous

daughters as well.) We have today precisely the same situation existent throughout Christendom. We have the preachers, 'teachers' and spiritual 'lights' who write and teach and preach according to the instruction of the 'theologians', who fill the place of the 'lawyers' of old. Said the Christ to them:

> "WOE unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."
>
> Luke 11:52

"THUS is it today. We have the long-frocked Theologians who have taken away from the masses the KEY TO UNDERSTANDING; they were too gross and carnal to enter themselves, and those who sought to enter they prevented!

The first millennium of Christianity saw the undisputed sway of the Catholic church. Before the era of learning entered, they filled the seat of the ancient scribes and lawyers. When LEARNING commenced to be the possession of the many instead of the few, they hurriedly forbade their faithful to read the Scripture! (Forces of tyranny and oppression have always feared the UNDERSTANDING engendered by LIGHT!) Then came the "Reformation", bequeathing to man RELIGIOUS LIBERTY! But what has its appointed 'caste' done? Have they led the people to God? But NO! to the brink of suicide!

Instead of rising to their glorious heritage in freely proclaiming God's Truth, they have fought among themselves in quest for power and rulership. They have established 'colleges' and institutions for the propagating of man's erudition. First there was gross darkness and idolatry under the oppression of an ecclesiastic oligarchy. Now we have CONFUSION caused by a thousand discordant voices, ALL claiming to be the "IT" of God! Just what is the vital difference between ignorance

fostered in darkness, or BEFUDDLEMENT caused by multitudinous voices?? BACK TO THE BIBLE! Give 'theologians' the boot, and get BACK TO THE WORD OF GOD! THIS have I said and it bears repeating: Has God the intelligence to say what He means? And has He the HONESTY to mean what He says?

How can there by any controversy as to its right answer? Then BACK TO THE BIBLE! "Search the Scriptures" diligently (Jn. 5:39; Acts 17:11) and see for yourself what TRUTH is! Today is the age of LEARNING. Almost everyone in the Western world is fully capable of DISCERNING THE TRUTH unaided; the only difficulty being how to fully cast out the BIAS and preconceived ideas previously gathered through indoctrination. For, so long as certain ideas and concepts RULE WITHIN, so long WILL TRUTH EVADE US! Can you conceive of a righteous and loving Heavenly FATHER who uses confusing 'double talk' to His children; requiring a special caste to "interpret the Scripture"? Any decent FATHER speaks to his children in language they can understand! Can we attribute less sanity and righteousness to God? THEN BACK TO THE BIBLE! Can we have hundreds of sects and denominations within Christendom, yet ALL of them be right? Even a fool knows the answer to that one! Therefore, BACK TO THE BIBLE!

Let us now take a look at a very VITAL Scripture with reference to this study:

> "...no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."
>
> II Peter 1:20 & 21

Here we have one of the clearest of denunciations of man's practice to "interpret the Scripture". Yet ask any 'theologian' or 'scribe' these days about the above passage, and they will immediately 'interpret' it. Boldly and brazenly will they declare that "it doesn't mean what it seems to say"!

For, say they, we see by the 21st verse that the prophets of old "spoke as they were moved by God", wherefore (say they) that the 'interpretation' mentioned in vs. 20 is THE SAME THING; i.e. that the prophets did not speak their own ideas!

More double talk from God - according to that! But what else can they say? Admit for a split moment that it MEANS WHAT IT SAYS and their whole system of 'theology' falls apart, leaving them not a leg left to stand on! For, their theology is injected by INTERPRETATIONS from opening to close! For, without 'interpretation' of Scripture there could be no room for multitudinous sects and divisions. The present Babylonish system within Christendom is founded on INTERPRETATION: without it they disintegrate!

Perhaps an incident which occurred some time back will help to illustrate the TRUTH of the point involved.... I had applied to the Tax department of the Government for a refund on "Sales Tax" paid on the purchase of ink, paper and envelopes. For, they have a ruling that "literature for the promulgation of religion" shall not be subject to Sales Tax (10%). When the Official arrived to check the invoices, etc., he deleted various items from the list. He went on to explain that envelopes used in the mailing of religious literature were 'incidental', and not "for the promulgation of religion". Summing up he used these words (substantially): "After all, the Government reserves the right to INTERPRET its own enactments; for, it cannot leave to PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS the right to INTERPRET ITS CLAUSES"! Unwittingly this government official was REstating what Peter wrote 19 centuries ago: that private individuals had no right to INTERPRET the declarations of God (government); for, God (government) must be the interpreter of His own declarations, IF, as and when interpretation is called for!

Therefore is it written: "Do not INTERPRETATIONS belong to God?" - Gen. 40:8

Peter was clearly stating a simple but highly

important Truth, saying that PRIVATE INTERPRETATIONS were out of order, "for" (vs.21) said he, the Revelations were given by God (therefore could not be interpreted by man)! Wherever interpretations are called for, THAT MUST PROCEED FROM GOD!

Many will now retort: surely there are many Scriptures in apparent conflict which must be INTERPRETED! Let us see. . . . First let me state plainly: there is NO scripture which man has the slightest right to 'interpret'. Secondly, such passages which appear in need of interpretation MUST BE ILLUMINATED, CLEARLY AND UNDISPUTABLY, BY SOME OTHER PORTION OF GOD'S WORD. And finally, most passages instead of needing 'interpretation', need merely understanding of the words employed, often necessitating reference to the ORIGINAL TEXTS which have been translated to bring out the IDEAS OF THE TRANSLATOR rather than the Divine Word as originally given.

Now to take a few instances. The one of II Peter 1:20 as given on the preceding page, is a striking instance of how our 'theologians' with great nonchalance, brazenly CONTORT the Word of God in order to 'save face'. Similarly do they treat any other passage of Scripture which does not happen to fit into their own particular 'theology'. Yet the passage is so clear and undisputable that a 10 - 12 year old child can show forth its meaning. And it takes the 'gall' of a 'theologian' to contort it to a lie!

Jesus said: "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead"! - Matt. 8:22. Since recorded time it has not been seen that a corpse arose to bury another. Manifestly then, this passage calls for ILLUMINATION. Yet we have no right to advance our own ideas. But let us bear in mind that Jesus was a Spirit-conscious being, and many of His sayings were uttered from the spiritual perspective. . . . In Matthew 9:24, also in Mark and Luke, we see where our Lord said: "...the maid is not dead, but sleepeth", (and they laughed Him to scorn). Indeed, as we study His language, we find that He was loath

to take any cognizance of the physical body, for, to Him it was but MATTER, every molecule and atom of which OBEYED HIS EVERY WORD, whether they constituted millions of tons of water in the sea, or the decomposing cells in a corpse. In recognition of Christ's SPIRIT-perspective, the illustrious Paul wrote to the Ephesians (2:1): "And you hath He QUICKENED, who were dead in trespasses and sins". Almost identical words are used in Colossians 2:13. Whereby we see that the apparently difficult becomes very simple as soon as we apply THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD. . . . Had Jesus been given to voluble speech, He might have said: Let those who live in the death-dealing consciousness of a carnal concept; swayed by their every lust and subject to the penalty of transgression, arise to entomb the corpse. But you who have been awakened by the Word of God, GO AND PREACH THE GOSPEL (of Life)!

On another occasion Jesus said: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." - Matt. 16:6. I have said: Has God the intelligence to say what He means, and the honesty to mean what He says?! Deliberately have I chosen these passages, for, off hand, I can think of none which on the surface come closer to challenging the correctness of what is implied in the above. Wherefore, when I demonstrate how it holds true in the EXTREME INSTANCES, you can more readily believe that it also holds true in the lesser.

First bear in mind that the Pharisees and Sadducees were RELIGIOUS and POLITICAL elements; they WERE NOT VENDORS OF YEAST! Wherefore, there was not the slightest possibility of the disciples thinking that He warned them against buying YEAST from a Pharisee! However, they were stupid enough to think that He was speaking of bread. But in jumping to that conclusion they made their usual error - as do people today - of supposing that He said one thing and meant another!

From the opening of Genesis and right through the Old Testament, we find that God employed a vast range of SYMBOLS to portray SPIRIT-TRUTH unto

man. Especially is this pronounced in the Mosaic Ordinances. There we find bread leavened and UNleavened. No leavened bread could be used at the Passover, nor in any meat offerings. And the fare of the Priesthood which served in the Holy Place was that of UNleavened bread. Leavened bread was not permitted to enter the Holy Place! By numerous such ordinances, it was expected of them that even an empty skull should understand that leaven was an UNholy symbol! A little reflection reveals that it causes fermentation, which in turn is a limited degree of CORRUPTION. Manifestly, corruption is not in agreement with an Holy and INcorruptible God.

Then we move into the New Testament. Here we are told that the devil is "*the prince of the power of the air*" (Eph. 2:2). Leaven when mingled with flour causes fermentation, leading to a fluffing up BY THE INTRODUCTION OF AIR CELLS! A small amount of UNleavened dough, when leavened, yields a piece of bread several times the original size. THAT is FALSE APPEARANCE! And it is FALSE by the medium of that over which the devil has been given jurisdiction!... Hereby we see more clearly WHY leaven was the symbol of an UNholy thing as ordained under Moses. And, the disciples, in fact all Jews of Jesus' day, were expected to possess this elementary understanding of God's symbology. Wherefore, when Jesus spoke these words we are considering, He knew they couldn't possibly think He meant yeast; but they SHOULD have understood the simple symbol of leaven.

However, lest we enter into 'interpretation', we refer to I Corinthians 5:6 - 8, where Paul, who was well versed in the Law, states clearly:

> "...*neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the UNleavened bread of sincerity and TRUTH.*"

Whereby we see (God being the INTERPRETER of His own Word) that He warned them against the hypocri-

sy, malice and wickedness of the Pharisees, who were not sincere, neither taught they the Truth!

Thus again we see how Jesus lived in A SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS, looking at everything from God's perspective, and giving voice to those thoughts in symbolic language which they were expected to understand, having been SCHOOLED therein through the Mosaic ordinances.

Now let us take A BOLD step to look at one little word, and how it has been brazenly MIStranslated to uphold DOGMA.

> "And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for EVER and EVER"!
>
> "...where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for EVER and EVER"!
>
> Rev. 19:3 & 20:10

The 'little word' here referred to is 'aion' in the Greek, with the English equivalent of 'eon'. The translators of the Authorized Version (A.V.) have rendered it 'for ever', 'Eternal', 'Age' and 'the WORLD'; in the latter instance over 30 times!

Now, even a child should realize that if AION means TIME without end, then it certainly cannot mean 'the WORLD'! The Greek AION refers to TIME and that of long duration, but of an UNspecified duration. Our more common English equivalents are 'era' and 'age'; 'eon' is the correct translation, but not too common a word in today's English, and hence does not carry to the average reader the specific thought as does 'era'.

Now, some may find it difficult to accept the above plain and true statement of fact. And their reasoning may seek to justify the translators, and also - perhaps - their own ministers or spiritual guides who preach "fire and brimstone FOR EVER AND EVER!" In such a case they may reason somewhat like this: IF 'AION' means TIME of great duration,

could it not equally as well stretch into time UN-ending? Can we today speak with ABSOLUTE CERTAIN-TY of the fine demarcations of meaning conveyed by foreign words used two thousand years ago?

To the first question above, we know that MAN can be loose enough in his expressions to stretch a few thousands years (perhaps) into an ETERNITY. But NOT SO WITH GOD! The words or expression He used to convey LIMITED time He would never use to convey UNlimited time! And the Scripture came by God - not by man. In this particular case we can speak with GREAT CERTAINTY as to the SPECIFIC meaning of the Greek AION!

Supposing a great criminal stands before the bar of justice. A venerable Judge of many years' experience is about to pronounce sentence. With much gravity he says: "I sentence you to lashings, and hard labor in prison for your LIFETIME and for your lifetime!"

Surely, there is here no reader so blind that he would consider such a Judge rational! For, in a split second of time he would realize that when the criminal had served to the end of his days and had died (served his 'lifetime'), he could not rise up to serve the same again! Utterly impossible! A man has but ONE LIFETIME.

How infinitely more, then, does not this same thought and TRUTH apply to the Scripture quoted? For, the blind could murmur that a dead man might come to life again! But NOT SO WITH ETERNITY! That UNending measure of TIME which runs on and on, and never, Never, NEVER ceases, shall MOST EMPHAT-ICALLY, never, NEVER, nor ever run its course again! Therefore was that word REPEATED ("for ever AND ever") to force us to realize the LIE of the devil: the great deceiver.

He who spoke the words from CENTRAL POWER said: For every idle word you SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT! And again He said: Let your words be Yes and No, for what is added thereto has its origin in Evil!

Can we think for a moment that He who demands of mortal man extreme care and precision in his

conversation, will Himself babble incoherently? But banish the abominable thought! How dare we then to impute nonsensical words to the Eternal Creator and Infinite Widsom!

Wherefore I implore you in the name of common decency to stand on your OWN feet, irradiating His Glorious Image by USING honestly and fearlessly those 10 billion brain cells He gave you for that very purpose! And whatsoever parrot, mumbler or deceiver speaks contrary to the Word of God, tell him plainly to his face what he is! Look at the life and the words of the EXACTING Jesus Christ: did He 'soft soap' the hypocrites? Did He sugar-coat His thoughts of the Pharisees and Lawyers? Indeed no! In stinging words He told them to their faces precisely what they were. Therefore did they HATE HIM - to the culmination upon the Cross! (Therefore am I too hated, for I curry favor from no one. But without fear or concern, expose the corruption in Protestant and Catholic churches alike; and declaring the lies of the 'theol•gians' without trace of respect for their 'vestment'. Truth and TRUTH alone can I honor. Therefore do I also seek out the 'cultists' and expose their vapid mouthings of empty platitudes and fabricated lies. Wherefore, none of them lose nor loose their love upon me!)

Does not the wisdom of the ancients declare:

> "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going."
>
> Prov. 14:15

And the illumined Paul said:

> "PROVE all things; hold fast that which is good."
>
> I Thess. 5:21

But carefully observe this: though we should abhor evil and expose lies, we must NEVER hate their

peddlers! For instance, a gospel minister who may exude the fumes of "sulphur and brimstone for ever and ever", may - possibly - have turned numerous people from paths of error to that of righteousness. He may be a faithful visitor to the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and he may be the source of inspiration and courage to the bereaved. He may be the champion of everything good and right in his community. And IF so, for any one of the above DEEDS OF GOODNESS he is well worthy of your admiration and staunch support! It is even like unto a youngster who gets into such serious error that the parent collapses from the shock! But will the parent hate the child? NO! Why? Because the parent KNOWS that there is also an immense amount of GOOD within the youngster. And for that GOOD and that BEAUTY, the girl or boy will always be loved by the parent! Even thus must our attitude be towards those who parrot untruths and propagate lies: for their GOOD (works) we LOVE them and HELP them and SUPPORT them, but against their deceit and lies we must remain unflinchingly outspoken.

Do you want to understand the Bible? Then DARE TO BELIEVE that God means what He says. But IF the language used is symbolic, or partly so, then study must be made to see how He has elsewhere revealed its nature and meaning. Dare to reject ALL of man's INTERPRETATION, but abide in God's DECLARATION! Look up ALL passages dealing with the matter under study, and also those even remotely connected. In order to do that, you must be THOROUGHLY familiar with the entirety of Scripture in order to assemble before your mind's eye EVERYTHING bearing directly and indirectly on the matter. With those facts assembled, together with a correct understanding of the words used in the originals, you are in a position to arrive at an understanding of His TRUTH - even to a far greater degree than your own Minister, Priest or Theologian! WHY? Because IF you will go to these labors, then you are SEEKING TRUTH! But most Ministers, Priests and theologians do NOT seek TRUTH! They seek only to search out

isolated passages which CORROBORATE that school of theology to which they belong; and whatsoever passages are unfortunately found in conflict are put through the required 'interpretations' and contortions to disqualify for entry! We must bear in mind that a Protestant Minister, or Catholic Priest, or Theologian have all POSTS TO FILL: they have a job to hold down; wherefore, they dare not reach out for TRUTH lest they should see too much and their conscience disturb them and their livelihood be imperiled."

It is now about 50 years since Mikkel Dahl commenced in earnest an ALL OUT STUDY OF SCRIPTURE. And at its outset (or before), he states:

"I realized that I could not hope to find TRUTH (in its FULLNESS) in any Church nor recognized Faith! First, because all wrangle among themselves, even to the extent of bitter disagreement on very vital issues. And finally (though most importantly) our Lord said:

"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh,
SHALL HE FIND THE FAITH ON THE EARTH?"

Luke 18:8

We have today more faithS on earth than ever before. Wherefore we cannot evade the conclusion that He spoke of THE TRUE FAITH rather than the extent of the general faith. Or, if we carefully assess the context in which the quoted words appear in Luke 18:7-8, we may conclude that He referred to faith in His justice and in His RETURN! Yet even so, it takes but a moment's reflection to realize that such faith is founded in and grounded upon THE TRUE FAITH. For, it is the invasion of heresy and the contortion of Truth to suit the concepts of man which have undermined the unswerving faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ! UNLESS we deal loose and fast with the Scripture

just cited, we realize at once that the Lord Jesus predicted at that time that His return (to earth) would be distant, and by that time THE TRUE FAITH would have suffered such mutilation by theologians, that He seriously QUESTIONED as to whether or not it could then be conceded that THE TRUE Faith (as He delivered it) would be found on the face of the earth!

Yes - beloved - THINK THAT OVER, and consider it seriously. And be not so simple as to think as all others do: "Why oh why cannot others also have THE RIGHT faith as we do?" Superabundantly is it clear that so long as man reserves the right to 'INTERPRET' Scripture, so long will faithS increase and TRUTH wane into the shadows of night! One and ONE course only remains to find TRUTH, and that is to not interpret Scripture, but to accept literally and in sum and substance ALL of the inspired Word rejecting nothing!

In the Book of Revelation, chapters 7 and 14, we read about the 144,000, which in 14:4 are declared to be the 'firstfruits'. In the Law of Moses we are also told about the firstfruits. How is it then that so few - if any - of our theologians will bring out this Scripture and make its TRUTH known to the church? I will tell you why: it would detract from the POPULARITY of their theology, or should I say, eschatology! The teachings of Christ were not POPULAR in His day among the Jews! It was not POPULAR as taught by Paul among the Gentiles. It is not POPULAR today! Therefore have our theologians, priests and ministers termited in order that their theology might win and hold a measure of popular acceptance! Therefore is Scripture 'interpreted' to the end that Truth might stay covered, and man's erudition be ascendant. Therefore have 'cults' sprung up to dish out piffle to the tickling of human vanity and the catering to self indulgence!

In Matthew, Mark and Luke is recounted the Parable of the Sower. And the Lord said:

"But other fell into good ground, and

brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."

Matt. 13:8

WHY is it that the TRUTH of these THREE groups of Christians has not been set forth in church dogma? Why is it that it is INTERPRETED to hide the Truth? WHY the parroted babble about the Fruits being 'WORKS' in which we all differ? In Mark 4: 15 it is clearly stated that . . .

"Satan cometh immediately, and TAKETH AWAY the word that was SOWN IN THEIR HEARTS."

Do we plant in AMERICA and reap the harvest thereof in EUROPE? How stupid! Wherefore, the seed sown in the human HEART brings forth the fruits IN THE HUMAN HEART! Namely: love, goodness, mercy, charity and everything which is good and enobles. THAT is again hammered at us in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation in the Message to the 7 Churches: "He that OVERCOMETH...!!" But beloved, THAT isn't POPULAR! Heaven must be EASY of attainment, available the lollypop way: "Jesus paid it ALL! NOTHING for you to do but hand your monies over to the church and WAIT in idle merriment!"

To WHOM were the Epistles written? To WHOM were the promises made? Do they apply to all and sundry? "HOW readest thou?", said our Lord!.... Beloved, it could be that you have much left to learn!"